



SUMMER 2011 NEWSLETTER

Hello members,

Springtime is almost over and as I write this the first big weekend of the summer season is beginning. State Parks are being targeted for closures, spending cuts seem to be the norm and park staffing levels remain low. Your parks need our help now more than ever. There are many ways to help, such as volunteering at special events that we sponsor, like the upcoming Kite Day at Pacheco State Park. Or you can talk with your friends about joining the Four Rivers Association so they too can volunteer or help sponsor different educational and interpretive events for the parks.

--David Milam

Pacheco State Park's Eighth Wildflower Day

By Jennifer Morgan, State Park Interpreter



Saturday, April 2nd. Cloudy skies and green fields carpeted with wildflowers greeted visitors at Pacheco State Park's Eighth Annual Wildflower Day this Saturday. Organizers estimated that over 150 people attended this event.

The guided hikes were a huge success. The early Birding Hike, led by Central Valley Bird Club member John Fulton, had 17 participants.

They were treated to spectacular views of Red-tailed Hawks, a common local bird, as

well as numerous hummingbirds- our smallest local bird. The next hike, the Wildflower Hike, led by retired Pacheco State Park ranger Dave Milam, had 29 hikers. The hikers also learned about the Native American uses of plants and history of the Pacheco family. The noon hike for 15 people was led by both hike leaders, who shared their knowledge of plants and birds.

Wildflower Day visitors also walked around the various information tables where they could learn about local nature groups such as the California Native Plant Society, the Central Valley Bird Club, and the Department of Fish and Game. There was also a table for California's Department of Water Resources where a giant hamburger showed visitors that nearly 700



gallons of water are required to produce a single regular hamburger. Also a lot of Water Safety information was provided for free to the visitors there, as well as information on California's Aqueduct system.

The California State Park Welcome Table provided free crafts for the kids as well as brochures on local parks, nature hikes, and upcoming special events. Pacheco State Park Naturalist Jennifer Morgan is grateful to all her volunteers who helped at the event. Without their enthusiastic assistance, Wildflower Day could never happen.

Hot Dog Heaven restaurant from Los Banos had hot dogs, snacks, and beverages available for lunch.

State Park organizers were happy with the turn-out for this year's Wildflower Day, considering that it was cloudy and very windy. Nevertheless, the winds did little to dampen the spirits of the attendees. Due to a cooler than normal spring, organizers said that the wildflower display is about 2 weeks later than usual, and that the weeks to come will bring even more flowers to the green fields.

Although Wildflower Day is celebrated once a year, Morgan's 2 hour, 2 mile long Wildflower Hike was offered on weekends for the rest of April starting at 10 a.m., except Easter Sunday April 24th. The only fee was the \$5 park day use fee per vehicle.

Not only hikers, but mountain bikers and horseback riders also flock to Pacheco State Park each spring since the park opened in 1996. The last Pacheco State Park event this year will be the 10th Family Kite Day on Saturday, June 18th.

Pacheco State Park is open from sunrise to sunset. As the month progresses, different flowers fade while other ones come into bloom. Visitors need to be reminded that there is no drinking water in the park, the weather can change quickly and is often different from the weather they left at home. Thanks to Pacheco family descendant Paula Fatjo's generous land donation, Californians have a beautiful wilderness Coast Range state park that preserves the native plants and animals for all to enjoy.



The Bay Area Orienteering Club Event at Pacheco State Park - April 16-17, 2011

By Jennifer Morgan, State Park Interpreter

This weekend the Bay Area Orienteering Club (baoc.org) hosted a National Orienteering Contest at Pacheco State Park. Orienteering is a family of sports that requires navigational skills using a map and compass to navigate from point to point in diverse and usually unfamiliar terrain, and normally moving at speed. Participants are

given a topographical map, usually a specially prepared orienteering map, which they use to find control points.+ (from Wikipedia)

This has been an actual sport for over 100 years, but only recently is it becoming popular in the United States. Armed forces practice orienteering as do some boy scouts. Our biggest clubs are from the Bay Area and Pennsylvania. It is very popular in Europe, and visitors have told me that the top orienteers from many European countries have competed against each other since 1959. In fact, during the meets, thousands of people turn out to cheer their countrymen on, and ESPN covers it for hours.

We are very lucky that the Bay Area Orienteering Club (baoc.org) decided to have a national event at Pacheco State Park. In fact, one man had spent 4 months, 8 hours a day, mapping every single rock, bush, and tree that was over 1 meter high at Pacheco. (This provides us with a fantastic base line map for the future.) Then volunteers decided on various courses and routes for the many different age and ability groups that participated. Of course the young and fit ran from point to point, while another course was designed for walkers. Individuals competed alone, plus could also be part of a group. It was called %2011 O-in-the-Oaks A meet, US InterScholastics Championships, and US InterCollegiate Championships+.

Each person had a detailed map of the terrain, course, and checkpoints for their level of competition. Most had compasses strapped to their wrists. At each checkpoint, participants used a digital device to confirm that they were at that checkpoint, before they ran on to the next spot. At the end of the race, when they checked back in, they were given a print out that listed each time between points, and their total times. Since contestants were started in successive times (in other words, they don't all start running together like a regular race), they then all compared their times with their friends' times. Runners that started later had the advantage of seeing the trail in the grass, but it was hotter.

Over 430 contestants actually participated, plus there were families looking on. Most all of the work was done by volunteers. At this National event, we had contestants from as far away as the Czech Republic, Russia, Australia, and Finland, as well as Florida, upstate New York, and Texas. Also, there were collegiate teams which included West Point. Most of them camped at Casa de Fruta, and 3 buses transported them back and forth.

We were all very lucky that the weather at Pacheco was absolutely perfect, and everyone had a terrific time. Not only was it not freezing, but the wildflowers were at their peak. Many baoc organizers thanked us for hosting them, and we thanked them for bringing all those people to our park! Also, fortunately, there were no major problems. Besides lots of blisters, several runners saw rattlesnakes and ticks, but mentioned they were glad there was so little poison oak. Probably the only concerns were a few horses that were scared by all the runners in a park that is usually very quiet.

Path of the Padres Hikes, Spring 2011

The Path of the Padres hikes were scheduled this spring from February 26th to May 5th. Twenty-nine hikes were scheduled (four had to be cancelled due to weather and water releases at Los Banos Creek Detention Dam).

458 people participated in the hikes this year. This was more than last year's participation. Twelve groups came on the hikes: Turlock High School, Valley Community School, San Joaquin School, Retired Rangers, Central Valley Hiking Club, Girl Scouts of Los Banos, Boy Scouts of Los Banos, Girl Scouts of Modesto, Home School of Auburn (2 hikes), and Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church of Gustine.

Everybody had a great time learning about the local and natural history of the area and some even took their own bath in the Creek of the Baths of Padre Arroyo.



The Path of the Padres hikes are funded by us, The Four Rivers Association. Without our assistance the park might not be able to offer this popular hike to the public.

Kids Fishing and Fun Day at San Luis Reservoir

2011 by Jennifer Morgan, State Park Interpreter

Fun was the catch of the day on Saturday, May 21st at San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area. The **22nd Annual Kids Fishing and Fun Day**, hosted by the Department of Water Resources, private donations, and California State Parks staff and volunteers, was held at San Luis Creek on the O'Neill Forebay. The day was bright and sunny, but because of the wind it never got too hot. Over 150 people came to North Beach on the Forebay to enjoy a family day in the great outdoors. Visitors arrived from 10:00 a.m. on and the event lasted until 2 p.m. It was for children ages 3 to 15. Free bait was provided and several caught striped bass fish and each received a framed certificate commemorating their catch. Also, each participant received delicious free strawberries and whip cream and a Water Safety Activity Coloring Book. Also, they were able to do free crafts which included making Japanese fish prints (sponsored by Fish & Game) and making their own kites. They also got to try a fun fishing simulator which showed them catching a big fish (on a flat screen TV) as they held a rod and reel which let them feel the strong pull of reeling in the big one. Some brought a picnic lunch while others purchased lunch from Los



BanosqHot Dog Heavenq Families could choose between the sandy shoreline or green grass under shady trees. Probably the biggest hit of all was a free boat ride on the State Parks pontoon boat. Retired State Parks Ranger Dave Milam really opened the boat up and raced across the Forebay. About 100 people enjoyed that opportunity. Other volunteers included students and faculty from Los Banos High School. (The only cost was the \$10 state park Day Use Fee per car.)

This special recreation program marked the occasion of the California Department of Water Resourcesqannual %May is Water Awareness Month+as well as California State ParksqMay is State Parks Month+. Thanks to those agencies, the volunteers, private donations and terrific weather--a good time was had by all.

Things to do this summer:

The Four Rivers parks (Turlock Lake SRA, Caswell Memorial SP, George J. Hatfield SRA, McConnell SRA, Great Valley Grasslands SP, San Luis Reservoir SRA, and Pacheco SP) have many different kinds of outdoor opportunities. All except Pacheco SP have water recreation, either rivers or lakes, where fishing, boating and swimming take place. Camping is allowed at all except Great Valley Grasslands SP and Pacheco SP. Sites range from primitive to those with hook-ups. Wildlife viewing is always a good pastime. Have you seen the Tule Elk that are often near the road to Basalt Campground at San Luis Reservoir? Or taken a hike at Pacheco SP or at one of the river parks to see 20 or more different species of birds in one day? Have you been to Caswell Memorial SP's riparian forest and seen why it was chosen as a filming location for a Tarzan movie?

KITE DAY AT PACHECO STATE PARK, JUNE 18, 2011

Pacheco State Park will again be the place to be for the 10th Annual Kite Day on June 18th from 11:30 to 3 pm. Bring your kites and join other visitors flying many



interesting kites. Or just show up to enjoy watching the kites soar. You can even make your own kite or purchase one at the event. Also happening during the event will be a bubble-gum blowing contest, a pie-eating contest, face painting, and maybe Smokey Bear will pay us a visit again. Other information tables include The Audubon Society, California Native Plant Society, Water Resources, and

California State Parks. The only cost for the event is the \$5.00 per vehicle parking fee. For more information call 209-826-1197 M-F from 9 am to 4 pm.

Director's Meetings from February 8 through May 17 update:

1. Our new Bylaws were finally finished and signed.
2. Our current Contract with the Department of Parks and Recreation has been extended for 2 more years.
3. We have published two full-color booklets that are being offered for sale. The first is Pacheco State Park Self-Guided Springtime Hike and includes photos of the wildflowers found on this hike as well as many other spring flowers in Pacheco SP plus birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, and insects that are found in the park. The second booklet is Spring Wildflowers of Pacheco State Park.
4. Directors were elected as follows: John Fulton and Eva Mae McClelland were elected for 1 year terms while David Batcho, David Milam and Madeline Yancey were elected for 2 year terms. After this point all Directors will be elected for 2 year terms. The annual election of Officers were as follows: President-Madeline Yancey, Vice-president-Eva Mae McClelland, Treasurer-David Batcho, and Secretary-David Milam.

Until our next newsletter,
David Milam, editor